

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

A complete list of all the presently or formerly pending claims in the application is provided below, with suitable headings to show the status of each claim and, where appropriate, its current text. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions.

Listing of Claims

1. (Currently Amended) In a gaming system comprising a central authority and a plurality of gaming machines, wherein the gaming machines are configured to receive balance data and input ticket data, and wherein the gaming machines are configured to generate meter data, jackpot data, output ticket data and player data, apparatus for providing data storage and communications between the gaming machines and the central authority comprising:

a first relational database located in the central authority, wherein the first relational database comprises a meter table, a jackpot table, a ticket table, a player table and a balance table;

a network; and

a data processing unit spaced apart from the first relational database and comprising:

a second relational database comprising a local meter table, a local jackpot table, a local ticket table, a local player table and a local balance table; and

a programmed hardware configured to provide a poller function and a data mover function, wherein:

(1) the poller function is configured to poll each of the gaming machines to obtain meter data, jackpot data, output ticket data and player data generated by the gaming machines over the network, the poller function being further arranged to format the obtained data in an auditable format before storing the formatted data in a corresponding ~~whereby the obtained meter data is stored in the local meter table, the obtained jackpot data is stored in the local jackpot table, the obtained output ticket data is stored in the local ticket table, and the obtained player data is stored in the local player table,~~

(2) the data mover function is configured to periodically transmit at least a portion of the ~~obtained~~ formatted meter data, formatted jackpot data, formatted output ticket data and formatted player data from the second relational database to the first relational database over the network, whereby the periodically transmitted meter data is stored in the meter table, the periodically transmitted jackpot data is stored in the jackpot table, the periodically transmitted output ticket data is stored in the ticket table, and the periodically transmitted player data is stored in the player table,

(3) the data mover function is further configured to periodically ~~obtain~~ retrieve input ticket data and balance data from the first relational database over the network independently of a request by any of the gaming machines, whereby the periodically ~~obtained~~ retrieved input ticket data is stored in the local ticket table and the periodically ~~obtained~~ retrieved balance data is stored in the local balance table, and

(4) the poller function is further configured to transmit at least a portion of the periodically ~~obtained~~ retrieved input ticket data and the periodically ~~obtained~~ retrieved balance data from the second relational database to the gaming machines over the network when said portion is required by the gaming machines; and an accounting module being arranged to evaluate the formatted and periodically transmitted data stored in at least one of the tables of the first relational database to automatically generate a gaming activity audit report for the plurality of gaming machines.

2. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the network comprises a first network arranged to transmit data between the gaming machines and the second relational database and a second network arranged to transmit data between the second relational database and the first relational database.

3. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a first processor arranged to manage the first relational database and a second processor arranged to manage the second relational database.

4. (Canceled).

5. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the data mover function is further configured to ~~obtain~~ retrieve from the first relational database at least one of output ticket data, player data, jackpot data and meter data generated by the gaming machines within a predetermined preceding time period.

6-20. (Canceled).

21. (Currently Amended) In a gaming system comprising (i) a plurality of gaming machines configured to receive balance data and input ticket data and configured to generate meter data, jackpot data, output ticket data and player data; (ii) a first relational database located in a central authority and comprising a meter table, a jackpot table, a ticket table, a player table and a balance table; and (iii) a second relational database spaced apart from the first relational database and comprising a local meter table, a local jackpot table, a local ticket table, a local player table and a local balance table, a method of providing data storage and communications between the plurality of gaming machines and the first relational database comprising:

(1) polling each of the plurality of gaming machines to obtain the meter data, jackpot data, output ticket data, and player data generated by the plurality of gaming machines;

(2) formatting the obtained meter data, jackpot data, output ticket data, and player data in an auditable format;

[[(2)]] (3) storing the ~~obtained~~ formatted meter data in the local meter table, the ~~obtained~~ formatted jackpot data in the local jackpot table, the ~~obtained~~ formatted output ticket data in the local ticket table and the ~~obtained~~ formatted player data in the local player table;

[[(3)]] (4) periodically transmitting at least a portion of the ~~stored~~ formatted meter data, jackpot data, output ticket data and player data to the first relational database;

[[(4)]] (5) storing the periodically transmitted meter data in the meter table, the periodically transmitted jackpot data in the jackpot table, the periodically transmitted output ticket data in the ticket table and the periodically transmitted player data in the player table;

[[(5)]](6) periodically ~~obtaining~~ retrieving the input ticket data and the balance data from the first relational database independently of a request by any of the gaming machines;

[[(6)]](7) storing the periodically ~~obtained~~ retrieved input ticket data in the local ticket table and the periodically ~~obtained~~ retrieved balance data in the local balance table; ~~and~~

[[(7)]](8) transmitting at least a portion of the stored input ticket data and the stored balance data to the plurality of gaming machines when said portion is required by the plurality of gaming machines; and

(9) automatically generating a gaming activity audit report for the plurality of gaming machines based on an evaluation of the formatted and periodically transmitted data stored in at least one of the tables of the first relational database.

22. (Canceled).

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21 wherein the step of periodically ~~obtaining~~ retrieving the input ticket data and the balance data further comprises periodically ~~obtaining~~ retrieving at least one of output ticket data, player data, jackpot data and meter data generated by the gaming machines within a predetermined preceding time period.

24-33. (Canceled).

34. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21, wherein the gaming system further comprises (iv) a second plurality of gaming machines configured to receive balance data and input ticket data and configured to generate meter data, jackpot data, output ticket data and player data; and (v) a third relational database spaced apart from the first and second relational databases and comprising a second local meter table, a second local jackpot table, a second local ticket table, a second local player table and a second local balance table, the method further comprising the steps of:

[[(8)]](10) polling each of the second plurality of gaming machines to obtain second meter data, second jackpot data, second output ticket data, and second player data generated by the second plurality of gaming machines;

(11) formatting the obtained second meter data, second jackpot data, second output ticket data, and second player data in an auditable format;

[[(9)]](12) storing the ~~obtained~~ formatted second meter data in the second local meter table, the ~~obtained~~ formatted second jackpot data in the second local jackpot table, the ~~obtained~~ formatted second output ticket data in the second local ticket table and the ~~obtained~~ formatted second player data in the second local player table;

[[(10)]](13) periodically transmitting at least a portion of the ~~stored~~ formatted second meter data, second jackpot data, second output ticket data and second player data to the first relational database;

[[(11)]](14) storing the periodically transmitted second meter data in the meter table, the periodically transmitted second jackpot data in the jackpot table, the periodically transmitted second output ticket data in the ticket table and the periodically transmitted second player data in the player table;

[[(12)]](15) periodically ~~obtaining~~ retrieving from the first relational database second input ticket data and second balance data for use in the second plurality of gaming machines independently of a request by any of the gaming machines;

[[(13)]](16) storing the periodically ~~obtained~~ retrieved second input ticket data in the second local ticket table and the periodically ~~obtained~~ retrieved second balance data in the second local balance table; and

[[(14)]](17) transmitting at least a portion of the stored second input ticket data and second balance data to the second plurality gaming machines when said portion is required by the second plurality of gaming machines.

35-39. (Canceled).